

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05 MCT-01 USSS-00 AID-05 IO-13
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P R 221045Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5329
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 8160

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AF
SUBJ: KILLING OF PLANNING MINISTER KHURRAM: POLITICAL ASSASS-
INATION OR PERSONAL FEUD?

REF: KABUL 8059

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE THAT PLANNING MINISTER ALI AHMAD KHURRAM WAS KILLED AS THE RESULT OF A PERSONAL FAMILY FEUD, THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAS ELECTED TO DESCRIBE HIS DEATH AS A POLITICAL ASSASSINATION. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE WHICH VERSION IS CORRECT. END SUMMARY.
2. IN A NOVEMBER 17 EULOGY FOR HIS SLAIN PLANNING MINISTER, PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOUD DECLARED THAT KHURRAM WAS "MARTYRED IN A COWARDLY MANNER AT THE HANDS OF A CRIMINAL, REACTIONARY
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AND TRAITOR." (NOTE: THE PREVIOUS EVENING THE AUTHORITIES HAD DESCRIBED THE PERSON THAT HAD ARRESTED AS A "DEMENTED YOUTH".) VARIOUS AFGHAN OFFICIALS HAVE PICKED UP THE DAOUD LINE, ASSERTING THAT KHURRAM WAS ONLY THE FIRST TARGETED VICTIM OF A SINISTER, WIDESPREAD PLOT HATCHED BY ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS. THE ORGANIZATION MOST OFTEN NAMED IS THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD (IKHWAN AL-MUSLIMIN),

ALSO KNOWN LOCALLY AS THE "HEZB-I-ALLAH" (PARTY OF GOD).
IN SUPPORT OF THIS THESIS, KHURRAM'S SECRETARY HAS BEEN
REPORTED TO HAVE HEARD THE KILLER DECLARE -- UPON FORCING
HIS WAY INTO KHURRAM'S OFFICE -- THAT THE PLANNING MINISTER
WAS ONLY THE "FIRST OF TWELVE MINISTERS TO DIE." (ANOTHER

VERSION REPORTED HIM AS SAYING "THE FIRST OF SIX" -- WHICH
IMPLIED SOME CONNECTION WITH THE RECENT CABINET CRISIS;
HOWEVER, KHURRAM HAD NOT BEEN AMONG THE RESIGNING MINISTERS.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER WAHEED ABDULLAH RECENTLY TOLD A PAKISTANI
DIPLOMAT THAT THE CAPTURED KILLER HAS MADE A "CLEAR CONFESSION"
AND HAS IMPLICATED 150 OTHER PERSONS. (NOTE: THE PAKISTANIS
ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT THE SEIZED PERSON IS INDEED THE KILLER.)
ACCORDING TO THE IRANIAN AMBASSADOR, ABDULLAH TOLD HIM
THAT THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD HAD BEEN BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION,
WITH PAKISTANI CONNIVANCE, AND THAT SCORES OF PEOPLE ARE
BEING ARRESTED.

4. FROM SEVERAL SOURCES -- INCLUDING SOME LOWER GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS -- WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE KILLING MAY HAVE BEEN
CAUSED BY A FAMILY FEUD, INVOLVING KHURRAM'S BROTHER-IN-LAW,
WHO RECENTLY COMMITTED SUICIDE OR WAS MURDERED. ACCORDING
TO THIS STORY, THE FAMILY OF THE DEAD BROTHER-IN-LAW
HAD A GRIEVANCE WHICH, UNDER AFGHAN CUSTOM, WOULD
HAVE REQUIRED SOME FORM OF REVENGE. ALTHOUGH THE
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KILLER APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN TOO PROFESSIONALLY PROFICIENT
TO HAVE BEEN AN ANGERED BROTHER OR COUSIN OF THE DEAD
BROTHER-IN-LAW, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT HE COULD HAVE
BEEN HIRED FOR THE JOB.

5. THE KILLING HAS WORRIED DIPLOMATS FROM PAKISTAN, WHO
UNDERSTANDABLY WONDER WHAT IT MIGHT PORTEND FOR THEIR
BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. ONE PAKISTANI OFFICIAL SAW THE
OFFICIAL AFGHAN VERSION OF THE KILLING AS A "RETURN TO THE
TRADITIONAL AFGHAN POLITICS OF CONSPIRACY." HE OPINED THAT
SUCH "BACK-SLIDING" CAN ONLY BE CORRECTED THROUGH THE
EXPEDITIOUS FORMATION OF THE NEW POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
DAOUD HAS PROMISED.

6. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IT IS STILL TOO
EARLY TO JUDGE WHAT MIGHT HAVE ACTUALLY HAPPENED IN THIS
CASE. INDEED, AS WITH MANY AFGHAN EVENTS OF THIS TYPE
(E.G., THE MURDER OF ARIANA PILOT GRAN), WE MAY NEVER
KNOW. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE DAOUD REGIME
HAS ELECTED TO UTILIZE THE KILLING TO STATE PUBLICLY
ITS CONCERN OVER THE THREAT IT PERCEIVES ON THE RIGHT --
A THEME WE HAVE OCCASIONALLY HEARD IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS

WITH HIGH AFGHAN OFFICIALS DURING THE PAST YEAR. ALTHOUGH
WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT THERE IS INDEED SOME SCATTERED RIGHT-
WING OPPOSITION TO DAOUD'S POLICIES, WE HAVE NOT YET SEEN
ANY SOLID EVIDENCE THAT IT IS EITHER NUMEROUS OR
WELL-ORGANIZED. WE DO NOT TAKE SERIOUSLY ALLEGATIONS
OF PAKISTANI INVOLVEMENT.
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